

is the polar star of all christian morality, the axiom to which every conscientious and enlightened man appeals. There are times when the claims and demands of men are so obviously at variance with the claims of God that there is no difficulty in deciding which to obey. While on the other hand there are occasions when men appear invested with official power to execute the laws of God, and yet they demand an obedience which interferes with the revealed will of God. On such occasions it is very difficult to arrive at an intelligent decision. In the case of the apostles they had acted rightly, though in direct opposition to the sanhedrim, they suffered imprisonment for their conscientious obedience to the will of God. God gave them his approving testimony and renewed their commission by sending his angel to command them to "Go and preach all the words of this life." They were thus prepared to meet their persecutors with an undaunted front and boldly to arrange the great principle of their conduct, "we ought to obey God rather than men." A soul without principle is like a vessel without compass or rudder, the sport of every influence to which it is opposed. But imbued with the principle avowed by the apostles, it will be able at all times to govern itself wisely and direct its course through all temptations and snares. Many would be spared much pain of conscience, worry of spirit, and inconvenience, if they would but adopt this principle as the solution of all doubtful questions regarding conduct. Happy is the soul that feels the law of God written on it by the Holy Spirit, and that can say "I delight in the law of the Lord."

6. *The exaltation of Christ.* In the defence of Peter, which by critics has been regarded as one of the finest pieces of pleading on record, is revealed the fact that our Lord was fulfilling his promise made to his disciples—"It shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak." Among other things Peter most emphatically announces the exaltation of that Jesus whom they despised, rejected and crucified. Him hath God—the God whom they professed to obey and who had promised the Messiah again and again—raised up honored and glorified to the highest possible position. In this short address Peter calls attention to.

(1) The dignity to which Christ was raised. The expression "with his right hand" does

not denote the agency of God in glorifying his Son, but intimates that our Lord enjoys divine honor at the Father's right hand, exercises divine authority, dispenses divine government in the universe for the good of his church and the subjugation of his foes.

(2) The character in which he was received. This Peter describes as "a Prince and a Saviour." As a divine person, Jesus never was deprived of his royal supremacy as King of the universe, and therefore, as God, he could never be exalted to a dignity from which he had never descended. But there was a dignity to which, as God and man in one person, he had never been formally raised. The princely office of Jesus as exercised in his exalted state, is very different from that sovereign power which he exercises as Creator and Preserver of all things. As the nature of Christ's kingly office is peculiar, so also is its exercise. His law is still the same immutable rule of righteousness which was inscribed on the human soul at creation, and repeated in the Ten Commandments at Sinai. But while strictest Justice is maintained in inflicting the penalty of the law on the guilty, there is exercised on the one hand long-suffering mercy to obstinate sinners, on the other the fullest and most gracious forgiveness to believers. But Christ is not only an exalted Prince, but also a glorified Saviour. He not only as Prince secures the happiness and dignity of his people, but considering their condition by nature, it is obvious that the most powerful means are requisite to accomplish their salvation from sin and misery. It was not only necessary that he should take their place, suffer the penalty they had incurred and answer for them the claims of divine justice, but he must like the high priest of old enter into the Holy Place and present the blood of his atonement as the ground of his intercession. Without this concluding act of his priestly office, no remission of sin could be granted, no prayer heard, no gracious intimation of divine love communicated. He saves to the uttermost all that come to God by him, because he ever lives to make intercession for them.

(3) The blessed consequences of our Lord's exaltation. These are here limited by Peter to those benefits which the God of all grace bestows on the children of men. "Repentance," "forgiveness of sins."